

SUGGESTED WELCOME REMARKS
Tyler Holt, USAID/P
National Workshop on WTO Negotiations
on Trade Facilitation
November 15, 2006, 9:00 A.M.
Heritage Hotel, EDSA, Pasay City

(if present) Undersecretary Thomas Aquino,
Department of Trade and Industry,

Bureau of Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales,
DTI Asst. Secretary Merly Cruz,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

On behalf of the U.S. Government, I want to
thank PhilExport, Commissioner Morales and his
entire staff, and the other organizers of this
workshop for bringing us here today to discuss
trade facilitation.

For all of you gathered here today, my special
welcome and thanks. I am pleased to see us
focusing on such an important topic.

As we discuss issues like trade, imports, exports, customs clearance, I think we all know what is really at stake - nothing less than the economic future of the country. There is now ample, irrefutable evidence that trade openness leads to faster economic growth and significant poverty reduction in developing countries.

We also know that countries can become more competitive in international trade -- by lowering transaction costs, streamlining administrative and regulatory procedures, modernizing ports and customs operations, and widening the use of IT throughout the trading sectors of the economy.

These so-called "trade facilitation" efforts are at the forefront of the development policy debate, and are therefore also an important part of the WTO's Doha Development Agenda, and regional initiatives such as ASEAN.

USAID is happy to support trade facilitation efforts in the Philippines. Let me just list a few of our activities...

We are supporting a request by Export Development Council to study what is needed for the Philippines to comply with the Revised Kyoto Convention;

We are helping to improve the Department of Agriculture's SPS administration systems, and to develop a standards and conformance portal for the Bureau of Products and Standards. Both of these systems will promote greater compliance with Philippine rules and regulations, as well as with the various product regulations and standards of WTO member countries.

And, we have made it possible for over 400 individuals from government, academe, and civil society to participate in DTI's Global Trade E-Learning program.

Finally, I would like to conclude by saying once again that USAID is pleased to be able to support this important workshop, to welcome you all, and to wish you the best success.

Thank you very much and good day.